



CONNECT

Connecting with God

#npconnect

Week 1
1 of 3
January 15, 2017

Bottom Line: We were made to have a fulfilling relationship with God.

Icebreaker: How old were you when you first remember praying? Was it a memorized prayer, or your own words?

Key Verse: *Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.* James 4:8

We were born for relationships. God made humans in His image so we could have a relationship with Him. He wanted it so badly that He walked in the Garden of Eden daily with His beloved creations, Adam and Eve. When the human connection with God was broken by sin, God immediately had a plan to restore the relationship, even though it would require the death of His Son.

But there's a big difference between being acquainted and being connected. God doesn't simply want us to be acquainted or just aware of who He is. He wants us to be truly connected; to have communion with Him in a fulfilling relationship. That's the story the Bible tells – how God desires connection with us so much that He has worked all through history to make that relationship with Him possible. He wants not to just be our Creator God, but someone we know as our own Father.

Jesus came and walked on this planet to show us what the Father was like, and to make the connection clear for us. The men who walked with Him, his disciples, saw that His power, peace, and purpose came from His relationship with God. They asked Jesus to teach them how to connect with God through prayer as He did. He responded, "When you pray, pray in this way: 'Our Father . . .'" When we deliberately and regularly connect with God as our Father, we develop an authentic relationship that prevents us from drifting into ritual and religion, which are powerless to fill the void in our souls.

St. Augustine's story is a succession of meaningless and desperate searches for fulfillment. He went down the predictable roads of excesses in every sensual way, working too hard, and even false religions and ritual. But one day he actually discovered a real relationship with his Father God. His famous "Confessions" burst with the reality of his connection with God, as he concludes, "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." That's what God wants for every one of us.

THINK IT OVER >>>

Thinking back on Dwight's message, what most spoke to your personal needs?

Dwight said connecting regularly and intimately with God provides relationship, restoration, direction, and transformation. Which do you believe is your greatest need in 2017?

David said that the one thing he wanted most was to be in close relationship with God all the days of his life (Psalm 27:4). How closely do you mirror that desire? What keeps you from prioritizing communion with God?

"You can be as close to God as you want to be." How do you feel about that statement? Why?

Who is someone whose closeness to God inspires you? What do they do to cultivate closeness?

LOOK IT OVER >>>

When in your life to this point have you felt closest to God? In that time period, what were/are you doing that cultivates communion?

James, the brother of Jesus, assured us that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us (James 4:8). What could you do to actively draw near that you don't do consistently right now?

How does the closeness/communion you have with God or your lack of it affect your confidence in prayer? In making decisions? In your other relationships?

NEXT STEPS

This week, consider taking some next steps together as a group:

1. Pray for each other, that your desire to know God intimately will be the greatest desire of your lives.
2. Agree to share with each other next week one thing that God showed you through prayer or Scripture this coming week.

EVALUATION/ACTION Realizing and reaching your full potential in Christ

Bottom Line: We were made to have a fulfilling relationship with God.

Rate yourself from 1 to 10 1 (never), 10 (always)	1	2	3	4		6	7	8	9	10
Why did you give yourself this rating?										
What benefits will you obtain by raising your rating?										
Do you know someone who demonstrates this bottom line well? What do you admire about that person?										
What specific action can you put into practice to raise your rating?										
At the end of this week, reflect - where did you see the bottom line show up in your actions throughout the week?										

PRAYER

List group members and their prayer requests for this week:

DAILY STUDY

Want to dig deeper? Check out **The Daily** this week at newpointe.org/daily:

Day 1: Revelation 3:20, James 4:8

Day 2: Psalm 42:2

Day 3: Psalm 23:2-3

Day 4: James 1:5

Day 5: Romans 12:1-2

Don't let the conversation stop here. Keep talking it over with others throughout the week.
(Don't forget to bring this paper to your next small group meeting)